



TAKING THE LONG VIEW  
OF INTEGRATION SERVICES

THE SERVICES NEEDS OF POST-THREE-YEAR  
IMMIGRANTS IN VANCOUVER & BURNABY

JUNE 2009

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MATT THOMSON

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# Executive Summary

In 2007, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), in partnership with the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA), through a grant from the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM), started a three-year research project focusing on the integration needs of service-seeking immigrants, located in Vancouver and Burnaby, who have been in Canada three years or more. The first year of this project was spent researching the needs of this group of service-seeking immigrants. A literature review was conducted to survey policies, programs and approaches to immigrant integration. This supported the research component of the project, comprised of a survey and focus groups involving service-seeking immigrants who have been in Canada for more than three years. This report presents the literature review and research findings.

The literature review presents the results of a brief review of immigrant integration policies and programs at the local, regional, national and international level in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the European Union. Its purpose is to provide background information for an assessment of integration programs in BC's Lower Mainland. The literature review offers some theoretical perspectives, discussing the process of integration (which moves from settlement, to adaptation, finally to integration and can take several generations), notions of multiculturalism, cultural diversity and the 'integration nexus,' or group of non-profits, businesses and government agencies that provide immigrant services. The remainder of the literature review then focuses on immigrant service agencies and programs in BC, examining the integration nexus in this province.

Three key conclusions emerge from the survey. The first is that services conventionally considered settlement services continued to be accessed by participants, despite them living in Canada for long periods of time. The second significant conclusion is that despite their proximity and many commonalities, the service needs of Vancouver survey participants and Burnaby service participants are somewhat different. The final significant conclusion of this survey is that while many immigrants who have been in Canada for more than three years access services from many organizations, many of them

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continue to rely specifically on immigrant-serving organizations, even after having been in Canada for many years.

Two major conclusions can be drawn from the focus groups. The first is that many settlement needs are not met within the first three, five or even ten years after arrival in Canada. This finding supports the view that integration can be a multi-generational process for immigrants. The second major finding of the focus groups was with regards to the different experiences participants had with community service agencies versus government service agencies. Focus group participants were largely positive about their experiences with community service providers, but they also expressed significant frustrations in accessing some government services.

Together, the survey and focus groups show that immigrants who have been in Canada for more than three years still need access to settlement services, and that often the organizations offering these services, whether immigrant-serving or multi-service agencies, are much more accessible and inclusive for immigrant populations than other service agencies, particularly government agencies. In order to allow immigrants to better realize the benefits of Canada, service organizations, whether immigrant-serving, multi-service or government agencies, need to be more strongly integrated. Many of the challenges, particularly with regards to information and quality of service can be addressed by greater collaboration between immigrant-serving, multi-service and government agencies. The next step for SPARC BC and AMSSA is this project will be to convene a collaborative planning table on immigrant service needs in Vancouver. This research will provide the basis for the next phase of planning and research, to be guided by the collaborative planning table. The third year of work will involve identifying and implementing strategies to improve services for immigrants in Canada three years or more.

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# Introduction

In 2007, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), in partnership with the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA), through a grant from the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM), started a three-year research project focusing on the integration needs of service-seeking immigrants to Canada who have been here more than three years. Through community partnerships and stakeholder consultations, a community-based research approach was designed with the goal of increasing the efficacy of the service delivery system for this immigrant population, with a focus on collaboration between immigrant serving and multi-service agencies. This report is the result of the first phase of research, which determined the service needs of immigrants in Canada more than three years, and the agencies at which these services are sought. This research was conducted in Vancouver and Burnaby, British Columbia, and focuses on immigrant service needs in these cities. This report contains the following sections:

- 1.0 Literature Review
- 2.0 Research Methodology
- 3.0 Survey Results
- 4.0 Focus Group Results
- 5.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

The literature review focused on both theoretical understandings of immigration experiences and a review of existing organizations and programs currently offered for immigrants. It situates immigration in BC by discussing the notions of integration, multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The literature review then describes the ‘integration nexus:’ the various non-profit, government and private sector organizations and programs that aid in settlement, adaptation and integration. Finally, the literature review examines the many organizations that provide immigrant services in British Columbia.

The research methodology component of this report outlines the process used for developing and conducting the surveys and focus groups. This section also discusses the limitations of each method of data collection and therefore provides the scope for the survey and focus group analyses that follow. The

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survey provided a quantitative analysis of immigrants' service needs after living in Canada for three years or more. The survey has two major components of analysis: the first is on the difference between service needs in Vancouver and Burnaby, while the second determines the services being accessed by immigrants who have been in Canada for different lengths of time: three to five years, six to ten years and more than ten years. The survey results show that the process of integration can take many years, as participants had a continuing need for what might be considered settlement services, particularly employment. Finally, the focus groups provided a quantitative dimension, allowing participants to vocalize their experiences, both frustrating and successful, around service access in Vancouver and Burnaby. These focus groups were conducted in Vancouver and Burnaby at both immigrant-serving and multi-service agencies. Key findings from the focus groups supported survey results, reflecting the length of time integration can take, and the difficulty in accessing certain services, particularly employment.

As this report represents the end of the first phase of research, it situates us for next steps: this report fits into the three-year plan designed at the outset of the project. Year one's central objective was to develop profiles and identify needs of immigrants in Vancouver and Burnaby who have been here for more than three years. This report represents the completion of that objective. It also provides the basis for year two's objective: to conduct assessment on community capacity and create collaborative initiatives. To this end, this report will be provided to the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT) as a resource for them. The next step for SPARC BC and AMSSA in this project will be to convene a collaborative planning table on immigrant service needs in Vancouver. This research will provide the basis for the next phase of planning and research, to be guided by the collaborative planning table. The third year of work will involve identifying and implementing strategies to improve immigrant services.

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# 1.0 Immigrant and Newcomer Integration: A Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

This literature review presents the results of a brief survey of immigrant integration policies and programs at the local, regional, national and international level in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the European Union. Its purpose is to provide background information for an assessment of integration programs in BC's Lower Mainland. The search was conducted primarily through the Internet and focused on material published since 2000. Extensive use was made of search aids at several web sites, including Citizenship and Immigration Canada's search aid, Integration-Net, Library of Links at the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA) website, the Metropolis Web Site, including Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM), as well as other web resources. US sources were not examined in this review, as other Canadian reviewers have found the differences between Canadian and American practices in this area are too pronounced to make a review worthwhile.

## 1.2 Integration and Cultural Diversity

### 1.2.1 Integration: Definitions, Dimensions and Debates

In Europe, the UK, Australia and even Canada, where multiculturalism finds its greatest acceptance, the subject of integration tends to trigger debates about assimilation or multiculturalism. As a result, there are various competing definitions of 'integration' in use, not a single, widely agreed upon one (e.g. see the discussion in EU, 2004, p. 8). BC's Immigrant Integration Branch (IIB)—formerly the Settlement and Multicultural Branch—has used a definition in its policy and programming work (Goss Gilroy, 2000; MOSAIC, 2003) that presents integration both as the last stage of a three-stage process of immigration and as the overall goal of the process. The three stages are defined as follows:

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- **Settlement** refers to meeting the initial needs of newcomers for the basic needs of life, signing up for language training, accessing general mainstream services with the assistance of the service provider, and understanding basic rights and responsibilities.

- **Adaptation** is characterized by an immigrant's ability to realize some of the benefits of settlement, including being able to access mainstream services independently, understanding Canadian social and cultural norms, improving language skills, developing contacts and building friendships in the community and reassessing personal goals.

- **Integration** refers to the ultimate goal of the process at which point immigrants demonstrate the ability to be fully functioning members of Canadian society. Among other things they have found and maintained appropriate employment, participate in mainstream organizations, volunteer their time in the community, associate with Canadian values and participate in the political process (voting, running for office, etc.).

The simplicity of this definition has obvious practical advantages. But as a conception of integration and its place in the overall immigration process, it fails to recognize some important new developments in the fields of (im) migration studies and integration.<sup>1</sup> It overlooks the fact that many newcomers to Canada do not pass through the stages of settlement, adaptation and integration in the expected amount of time or at all. Integration is also increasingly seen as a process that can begin before settlement itself and then last well into the second or third generation (EU, 2004, p. 14). Contrary to the unidirectional process the definition suggests, immigration is now generally seen as 'a two-way street' in which newcomer and host society are responsible for making adjustments and adapting to one another (EU, 2004; 2007). The focus on immigrants' absorption into the host society neglects important characteristics about newcomers as individuals – their immigration class, visible minority status, linguistic skills, gender, and family status, for example – that can make significant differences in how quickly and smoothly

1. Many of the new developments come from the European Union whose member states have been 'managing cultural diversity' and developing integration policies and programs for some time now (EU, 2004; 2007).

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integration occurs (EU, 2004). The definition assumes a type of settlement service delivery system that no longer exists in BC, particularly in the Lower Mainland (i.e. the single, one-stop service provider). Today, a widely dispersed 'integration nexus' is seen as integral to the 'mainstreaming of integration' (EU, 2007).

Debates about integration have not prevented consensus-building amongst those working with immigrants on a daily basis as to the dimensions of integration that need to be addressed. Most local, regional and national European immigrant integration programs all basically focus on the same things: "[t]he overall goal of integration is ... self-sufficiency" (EU, 2004, p. 9). The objective of these programs has therefore become one of enabling newcomers to lead an independent life in all respects. Typical areas of intervention now tend to include social and economic mobility, education, health, housing, social services, and social participation.

Regardless of the area involved, two challenges are increasingly seen as central to immigrant integration (EU, 2007). One is the elimination of inequalities. The other is the acquisition of competences (EU, 2007, p. 8). Shaping policies and programs that confront inequalities in economic life, education and housing – unequal access caused by a barrier of one sort or another – tend to be the responsibility of governmental and non-governmental actors. The acquisition of competences, on the other hand, "is directed at the overall population including immigrants and calls upon each individual to engage in a process of lifelong learning" (ibid.). This calls upon non-immigrant individuals and organizations to engage in, the acquisition of intercultural knowledge (EU, 2007, pp. 8 and 9).

## 1.2.2 Multiculturalism

In light of this more nuanced view of integration, how does integration as the ultimate goal of the immigration process relate to Canada's official policy of multiculturalism? The passage of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988 made Canada the first country in the world to possess a national law clearly affirming multiculturalism (or cultural pluralism) as a fundamental

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value. It seeks to assist in preserving culture, reducing discrimination, enhancing cultural awareness and understanding, and promoting culturally sensitive institutional change at the federal level. Its vision is the full and active participation of all Canadians in all aspects of life, regardless of their ethnic origin, race or religion. Departments and agencies are charged with respecting Canada's multicultural character and reflecting the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society by ensuring equal opportunities for Canadians of all origins in three main areas of activity: research, policy and services. Through the department of Canadian Heritage, they report annually on the implementation of the Act. Like its federal counterpart, BC's more recent *Multiculturalism Act* commits the provincial government to actions including programs that promote anti-racism and multiculturalism.

Surveys show that most Canadians support the country's official stance on multiculturalism because of its resonance with values such as equality, tolerance, and mutual respect. When asked what they are most proud of about Canada, for example, 77 percent of the population identify its multicultural nature. Similarly, when asked what word describes Canada well, 85 percent say 'multiculturalism' (Larocque 2004). However, multiculturalism is not necessarily what Canadians are thinking about when the topic of immigration is raised. In making this point, the Policy Research Initiative (2007) cites a Dominion Institute/CDFAI survey of 2005 in which "70% of Canadians indicated that adapting to the Canadian way of life should be the priority for new immigrants."

### 1.2.3 Cultural Diversity

If multiculturalism is a cherished but confused value in Canada, cultural diversity is a fact of life. The 2001 census reported more than 200 ethnic origins in the national population and about 13.5 percent claiming membership in a visible minority group. The country's ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious diversity is also increasing rapidly. Roughly 200,000 immigrants come to Canada each year, drawn by its quality of life and its reputation as an open, peaceful and caring society that values diversity. The number of newcomers and the shift from Europe to Asia and the Middle East as the major source

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regions of new Canadians has made immigration the primary motor behind the growth in cultural diversity. What's more, immigration presently accounts for more than 50 percent of Canada's population growth. By 2017, one in five Canadians will come from a visible minority group (PRI 2007) and after 2025, it is projected that national population growth will be based solely on immigration (Larocque 2004). Corresponding statistics for BC and the Lower Mainland are presented in section 2.1.

This kind and scale of immigration, together with other major demographic developments taking place in Canada at the present time has served to greatly expand Canadians' interest in cultural diversity. This is perhaps most evident in the so-called 'business case for diversity.' Businesses and employers are beginning to see that diversity provides workplace benefits, enhances a company's reputation within local communities and can help resolve labour shortages and result in the recruitment of highly skilled employees. In short, cultural diversity is now regarded as a global advantage that Canada should actively deploy. However, cultural diversity is also seen as a challenge. Much is being made these days of 'managing ethno-cultural diversity' particularly at the local level. Despite the fact that the Canadian constitution identifies multiculturalism as a federal and, since 1998, a provincial responsibility, municipal governments are increasingly seeing fit to pass their own multicultural legislation and initiate their own programs.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.2.4 The Integration Nexus

Immigrants arriving in Canada typically need assistance with language, employment, housing, day-care, education, and health care. Counselling, training, and legal and other social services are available to them in these various areas. However, newcomers face numerous barriers in the process of adapting to a new society, including barriers in the very settlement and adaptation services intended to help them. For years, settlement services were provided by the welfare state (the mainstream immigration services), the ethnic organizations that sprang up to serve the newcomers in their communities, and a variety of other non-governmental organizations like churches. Since the 1980s, volunteers have played an increasing role in the

2. See David Edgington's 2004 article, "Multiculturalism and Local Government in Greater Vancouver" in AMSSA's *Cultures West* for a brief survey of the actions Lower Mainland municipalities have taken in relation to cultural diversity.

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process, and most recently, the private sector has stepped in, creating ways of facilitating the adjustment and advancement of immigrants, usually in the area of employment. New kinds of coordinating mechanisms, consist of networks of service provider organizations working in partnership with various departments of municipal, provincial and federal government, are part of the integration nexus as well.

#### *Mainstream Immigrant Services*

The ways in which government services are delivered to immigrants in this country have recently undergone some major changes. Perhaps the most significant occurred in 1998, when the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia signed the Settlement Realignment Agreement. Under this agreement, the federal government transferred funds for the delivery of settlement services to the province, which took over responsibility for their administration. Citizenship and Immigration Canada retained the responsibility for approving applications for immigration and continued to oversee the naturalization process, as well as the country's major immigrant recruitment efforts overseas.

Since 2004, Canadian Heritage, the federal department charged with implementing the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988), has been charged as well with *Canada's Action Plan Against Racism*. This plan contains the programs, actions and initiatives the government will take, together with organizations, individuals, and ethno-racial and ethno-cultural communities, to create a society free from racism. The Joint Federal Provincial Immigration Advisory Council (JFPIAC) was created in January 2006. It is composed of 18 members who represent the immigration sector from numerous perspectives.

In British Columbia, ministerial responsibility for settlement, adaptation and integration programs has also changed. In the last 10 years, these programs have been administered by, consecutively, the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, and the Ministry of the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism. The latter is where the SAMB formerly

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resided.<sup>3</sup> The last five years have witnessed major changes in governmental approaches to contracting human and social services in BC, including the introduction in 2004 of an open tendering process for settlement service providers.<sup>4</sup>

#### *BC Settlement and Adaptation Program*

It is the BC Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP) that provides funding to organizations and individuals throughout the province to deliver specialized services that assist newcomers to settle in the province. The majority of settlement services are provided by agencies in the non-profit sector, an important exception being the ESL training that occurs in community colleges and private language schools. BCSAP is presently composed of five funding streams:

- Information and Support Services and Settlement Workers in Schools (Stream 1)
- Community Bridging Initiatives (Stream 2)
- English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) (Stream 3)
- Information, Support and English Language Services for Adults (Streams 1/3 blended)
- Sectoral Support and Delivery Assistance (Stream 4)

Each funding stream has specific objectives, eligibility criteria and service outcomes at the immediate, intermediate and long term.<sup>5</sup>

3. It is currently a program under the auspices of the Labour Market and Immigration Division of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (AVED).

4. For a critique of this process in terms of its impacts on the community of East Vancouver, see Riano-Alcala, 2005.

5. For more on these streams, see information sheets on the five BCSAP funding streams, at the BCSAP website: [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/bcsap.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/bcsap.html)

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### *BC Anti-Racism and Multicultural Program*

According to its website, the British Columbia Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Program (BCAMP) supports the development of welcoming and inclusive communities. The primary goal of BCAMP is to prevent and eliminate racism by enhancing community understanding of multiculturalism and cultural diversity in BC. Its objective is three-fold: to provide multiculturalism and anti-racism education, to develop community partnerships and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and to provide critical responses to racism and hate crimes. Projects in this program are meant to achieve at least one of the following outcomes: (a) increase public awareness and understanding of multiculturalism, racism or cross-cultural relations leading to the reduction of views, behaviours and practices that are racist and/or discriminatory; (b) develop effective and responsive mechanisms supporting concrete actions by individuals, organizations and governments to combat racism and build safer communities; and (c) help communities promote multiculturalism and eliminate racism through effective partnerships. BCAMP has two funding programs. Stream A helps communities promote anti-racism and multiculturalism, while Stream B assists communities throughout the province to develop community-led responses to racism and hate-activity. Each year, the Ministry approaches four new communities to enter the Critical Incident Response Model (CIRM) and then supports them through a three-phase process.<sup>6</sup>

### *Ethnic Immigrant Services*

Newcomers to this country must overcome a daunting array of barriers in order to access settlement and adaptation services from mainstream immigrant service providers. These include language, lack of information about services, cultural patterns of seeking help, lack of cultural sensitivity by service providers, financial barriers, and lack of service availability. It is the lack of equal access to mainstream services that has prompted some ethnic organizations to step in with cultural self-help to serve the newest members of their communities.

Ethnic organizations carry out a range of functions for the newcomers in their communities. These include acting as social service providers who offer

6. See the website for more details: [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/cirm.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/cirm.html)

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“accessible and ethnic-sensitive services” to help with settlement; functioning as the “link” or “broker” between newcomers and the formal service providers; helping maintain ethnic identities for newcomers; community education and community development projects of various kinds (Guo 2006; Beyene et al. 1996). Some examples of these organizations in the Lower Mainland include SUCCESS, the Vancouver-based organization that serves the city’s Chinese immigrant population, the Japanese Community Volunteers’ Association, and the Centre of Integration for African Immigrants (CIAI). These organizations, however, tend to be exceptions, with many immigrants seeking out other multicultural immigrant-serving agencies or multi-service agencies.

#### *Non-Governmental Organizations*

Aside from ethnic immigrant services, a variety of other NGOs are involved in the introduction of newcomers in the Lower Mainland. The YM/YWCA is one such organization. And church-based organizations play a key role in implementation, often teaching ESL courses. Both the Y and the churches therefore share responsibility in the integration process, provide direct contact between local residents and migrants, mobilize volunteers and, because they cooperate with other actors in the integration nexus, “they contribute to the dialogue in society about the desired outcomes of and paths to integration” (EU, 2004, p. 25).

#### *Volunteers*

The formal use of volunteers in state-organized settlement, adaptation and integration services in Canada developed in the 1980s when efforts were made to duplicate the highly successful private sponsorship arrangements that helped many Vietnamese ‘boat people’ in the late 1970s (AMSSA 2003). Recently in BC, these programs operated basically unchanged (from 1998 to 2001). Their scope was settlement and adaptation as well as integration. “In 2001/2, SAMB narrowed the objectives of both Host and Buddy Programs [see below], eliminating activities that promoted integration, and focusing the programs on activities that promote settlement and adaptation” resulting in a significant restructuring of programs (AMSSA 2003, p. 9).

Programs that engage people in one-on-one relationships – in this case, in the context of immigrant integration – are based on a variety of different

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models, including befriending, self-help, peer helping and mentoring. For a review of each of these models, written for purposes of creating a 'Made in BC' model of community bridging, see AMSSA (2003 pp. 33-39). Also see Charbonneau, Dansereau and Vatz-Laaroussi (1999) for a discussion of the many different factors that contribute to successful matches, including values, age, family constellation, country of origin, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

#### *The Private Sector*

In 2003, a review of community-bridging programs in BC (AMSSA 2003) recommended the development of three-way relationships between the government, the settlement sector and the private sector. The report suggested that "It might be an opportune time to do this: immigration is growing in importance to the Canadian economy, the private sector needs more skilled workers and an increasing number of companies have, or are developing, corporate social responsibility policies" (ibid., p. 8). Since that time, there has been a stepped-up involvement of the private sector in various areas, most obviously through the Provincial Nominee Program. The BC Safe Harbour Initiative represents a different kind of program altogether. Co-ordinated by AMSSA, the idea of Safe Harbour is to help create safe and inclusive communities that promote cultural diversity and eliminate racism in partnership with the business community (AMSSA 2004b).

#### *Networks*

The major support networks within the sector are AMSSA (the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC), English Language Services for Adults Net, the BC Immigrant Employment Council, and the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

**AMSSA:** As its name suggests, AMSSA is an affiliation of member agencies providing immigrant settlement and multicultural services in communities throughout the province. Formed in 1977 as a collaboration of several multicultural societies, AMSSA presently consists of 85 different agencies. It works as a centralized resource for its members, carries out educational initiatives for business, government and the public, and provides leadership in BC for anti-racism, human rights, and social justice. AMSSA's work

7. See AMSSA (2003, pp. 50-52) for a summary of this Quebec study's findings.

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centres around three major committees:<sup>8</sup> the Collaborative Committee on Multiculturalism, the Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee, and the Multicultural Health Committee

**ELSA Net:** The ELSA program provides basic level English training for adult newcomers to Canada and is funded by the government. ELSA Net, by contrast, is the society of ELSA service providers. These are organizations such as settlement agencies (non-profit organizations), community and university colleges, school board continuing education departments, and private schools that offer ELSA programs. The purpose of ELSA Net is to facilitate the effective delivery of English Language Services for Adults throughout the Province of British Columbia taking into account and recognizing regional differences and needs (ELSA Net website 2008).

**BC Immigrant Employment Council:** The BC Immigrant Employment Council “has been created to carry out a coordinated action strategy that addresses the challenges of immigrants finding and retaining appropriate employment.”<sup>9</sup>

**Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks:** The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is the centre of expertise in support of the national standards in English and French for describing, measuring and recognizing second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada (see [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca), the Centre’s main website).<sup>10</sup>

8. For complete descriptions please see AMSSA’s website: <http://www.amssa.org/>

9. More information available at <http://www.iecbc.ca/>

10. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has other websites:

- [www.celban.org](http://www.celban.org) is the main website for the CELBAN (Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses) and the online CELBAN Readiness Self-Assessment
- [www.itsessential.ca](http://www.itsessential.ca) is the website for information and resources about the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the Essential Skills for the Workplace
- [elearning.language.ca](http://elearning.language.ca) is the website for CCLB’s Online Professional Development resources and the Work Ready: CLB Resource Kit for Counselling and Hiring Immigrants

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## 1.3 Immigrant Services in BC

### 1.3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of a range of services available to immigrants in British Columbia, and the funding sources of many of these programs. Extensive information on programs, immigrant resources and funding sources can be found on the Welcome BC website ([www.welcomebc.ca](http://www.welcomebc.ca)). AMSSA has also recently released a report, *Inventory and Analysis of Community Services for Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia*, that provides an extensive overview of the availability and types of services provided in the five health regions in British Columbia. These resources can provide more detail than the summary provided here.

### 1.3.2 Statistical Overview

The Lower Mainland is featured in a statistical profile entitled *Characteristics of Immigrants to Different BC Development Regions (2002-2006 arrivals)* prepared by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The key characteristics of immigrants entering the region between 2002 and 2006 are as follows:<sup>11</sup>

- The Mainland/Southwest Development Region was the initial destination for the majority (91%) of all BC immigrants. There were 175,836 immigrants who arrived in the region from 2002 to 2006.
- The region had the highest percentage (20%) of children immigrants (age under 15) among all BC Development Regions.
- The region had the lowest proportion of immigrants who came with English skills (55%).
- More than half (53%) of immigrants to the region arrived with university education. This percentage was the highest among all BC Development Regions.

11. Source: Landed Immigrant Data Base, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001 Census, Statistics Canada.

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- The primary source countries of immigrants coming to the region were Mainland China, India, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan.

Statistics Canada has produced population projections of visible minority groups in the Lower Mainland for the year 2017. IIB has also mapped immigration statistics in a number of BC communities, including Metro Vancouver, Chilliwack, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Prince George and Victoria.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3.3 Orientation and Language Programs

Between 1991 and 2001, British Columbia received a total of 424,000 new immigrants. Of those, half were unable to speak, read or write English. While the majority of newcomers go on to communicate effectively in English, the impact during the learning period on government services is intense. . . The communication barrier is often the first substantial hurdle that newcomers face. How they overcome this hurdle depends on the resources that are in place to assist them in integrating into their new community (AMSSA 2004a, p.7).

The early stages of a migrant's residence in any receiving country are of particular importance: weak or nonexistent English language skills will greatly hinder a newcomer's adaptation and integration in every aspect of life. In order to smooth the settlement and integration process, orientation programs typically focus on three areas: civic orientation, labour market assessment and training and language assessment training.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, combined employment-language programs are increasingly recognized as valuable, as participants benefit from language teaching where it is placed in the context of work or training (for example, they can pick up the technical jargon necessary for a particular line of work). While the number and type of settlement and orientation programs offered in BC and the Lower Mainland are too numerous to discuss here, BCSAP currently offers funding for a range of funding for orientation programs in the following areas:<sup>14</sup>

12. Maps are available at [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/growing\\_your\\_community/trends/index.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/growing_your_community/trends/index.html)

13. On the importance of information about the host society to newcomers, see Caidi and Allard (2005).

14. For more information see [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/bcsap.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/bcsap.html)

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- **Information and Support Services and Settlement Workers in Schools (Stream 1):** Services including needs assessment, orientations to community and government services, and government referrals.

- **BC Settlement Workers in Schools (Stream 1):** A partnership with BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development “to provide a school-based outreach program that helps immigrant and refugee students and their families” (Welcome BC 2009).

- **Community Bridging Service (BCSAP Stream 2):** A program that matches immigrant and refugee newcomers with volunteers from the host society to develop community connections and learn to access services in the community.

- **English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) (Stream 3):** An English as a second language program for adult immigrant newcomers through third party organizations.

- **Information, Support & English Language Services for Multi-Barriered Adults (Stream 1/3 Blended):** The provision of Stream 1 support services coupled with English language instruction.

- **Sectoral Support and Delivery Assistance (Stream 4):** This stream is designed to enhance settlement service delivery “through the establishment and maintenance of effective and supportive networks and a professional workforce within the immigrant-serving sector.”

Civic orientation materials can be accessed in a number of places. The City of Vancouver publishes *A Newcomer’s Guide to Vancouver* in five languages – English, Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese. The guide has information about the City of Vancouver and other levels of government, as

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well as community agencies and services.<sup>15</sup> The Province of BC also publishes the British Columbia Newcomers' Guide in six languages: English, French, Punjabi, Korean, and Chinese – simplified and traditional.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.3.4 Employment

New immigrant workers are known to face a variety of obstacles in Canada in the course of finding work that makes full use of their talents. These barriers include the complexities of international documents, insufficient English language skills, unrecognized foreign credentials (or devaluation in other ways), little or no Canadian work experience, lack of networks, including access to professional associations and skilled trades, and limited knowledge of workplace norms, culture and employers. There are also the challenges of navigating a complex labour market entry system and outright discrimination.

Discussions of improvements to the current system tend to focus on customized client-driven programs, the need for an integrated approach, long-term career support and follow-up for clients, bridge-to-work programs and business partner networks. Strategic alliances or coalitions are increasingly common in the employment area. A range of employment programs are available throughout the province:

- **The Provincial Nominee Program:** British Columbia's *Provincial Nominee Program* offers accelerated immigration for qualified skilled workers and experienced entrepreneurs who wish to settle in BC and become permanent residents in Canada.
- **The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program:** In 2006, six consortia in BC with experience in the delivery of employment-related services targeting immigrants were selected through an open tendering process to deliver the Skills Connect for Immigrants Program administered by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (AVED). The program is intended to address critical skill shortages in the construction, transportation, energy, and tourism/hospitality sectors of the economy.

16. Available at [www.amssa.org/bcsap](http://www.amssa.org/bcsap)

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- **WorkBC:** Details about specific jobs or background information on BC's job market.
  - **WorkFutures BC:** Descriptions of nearly 200 occupations in BC.
  - **BC WorkInfoNet:** Trends in labour markets and occupational profiles.
  - **Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre:** A free service to teach immigrants about the education and experience they need in their career.
  - **Immigrants and the World of Work:** A guide written for and by immigrants about working conditions in BC.
  - **Working in Canada:** A federal government tool about employment in Canada.<sup>17</sup>

The Welcome BC website offers links to all of the programs listed above, as well as additional employment and settlement resources. Other funders of employment programming include the BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development and Canadian Heritage. Metro Vancouver offers a broad range of services, "including employment services funded through the national Service Canada program, provincial employment services for those on income assistance, and special initiatives (AMSSA 2008, p. 14).

### 1.3.5 Health

Effective intercultural communication is the most important part of a health care delivery system capable of meeting the needs of newcomers. This means communication about access to public health promotion, outreach, prevention, and intervention for multi-ethnic populations, as well as mobilization of key multi-ethnic communities regarding public health emergencies.

17. Links to these resources are available at <http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/settle/job.html>

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The AMSSA report, *Achieving Equal Access in Health Care*, focuses on eight communities outside of the Lower Mainland. Its conclusions, however, extended to the Lower Mainland (AMSSA 2004a, p. 7):

Across BC the consistent theme is one of community-based crisis response. . . . Health care systems that do not provide language services place unfair burdens on local immigrant and multicultural services agencies, many of whom are already under-resourced and under-funded, and give the responsibility squarely to volunteers within minority communities to “take care of their own.”

However, a range of health resources are available in BC and the Lower Mainland, some specific to immigrant populations and others that serve the broader community:

- Health Delivery: Six regional health authorities deliver health services to BC’s population, Northern Health, Interior Health, Vancouver Island Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Fraser Health, facilitated by the Provincial Health Services Authority.
- HealthLink BC: An information source for health services specific to immigrant populations and broader communities.
- Bridge Community Health Clinic: A Vancouver clinic focusing on immigrant and refugee communities, including a Newcomer Pediatric Health Clinic, translators and medical staff<sup>18</sup>
- Vancouver Coast Health’s Cross Cultural Clinic: A multi-lingual, culturally sensitive clinic offering mental health services to people suffering from major mental health disorder.<sup>19</sup>

18. Resources available at <http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/settle/healthcare.html>

19. Available at <http://find.healthlinkbc.ca/search.aspx?d=SV000365>

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- Promoting Health Living in BC's Multicultural Communities Project: An AMSSA project with the mandate to promote culturally sensitive, equitable and appropriate health care for all British Columbians, to encourage communication and cooperation on multicultural health issues between government, health-care providers, and the community and to promote the incorporation and implementation of multicultural policy in health-care organizations. (1) *Mapping Key Multi-ethnic, Multilingual Communities*; (2) *The BC Directory of Multicultural Health Expertise* (3) *Multicultural Health Fair Toolkit*<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, Metro Vancouver offers “specific health promotion and community-based outreach services to immigrants. These services include hot meal delivery, hospice volunteers, diabetes education and health clinic administration” (AMSSA 2008, p.16).

### 1.3.6 Youth

The field of settlement, adaptation and integration services has recently begun to address the youth among Canada's newcomer populations. This is evident in several areas. The new Joint Federal Provincial Immigration Advisory Council (JFPIAC), other government and sector representatives acknowledge that “a youth focus [is necessary] in the design and delivery of settlement, language training and labour force attachment programs, and the importance of multi-level public and private sector collaboration for immigrant children, young adults and families” (*Branch Update* 2007, p. 6). At the provincial level, the Multicultural Advisory Council's Committee on Youth Issues is now developing an implementation plan for youth involvement in multiculturalism. After meeting with the City of Vancouver's Social Planning Department and the Child and Youth Officer of BC to consider best practices, the committee is considering youth engagement, celebrating youth, and involving youth in participatory research (*Branch Update* 2007).

20. Resources available at [www.amssa.org/multiculturalhealthyliving](http://www.amssa.org/multiculturalhealthyliving)

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A range of other programs are currently or have been made available to youth throughout the Lower Mainland and BC:

- **Multicultural Youth Circle Program:** Immigrant Services Society of BC assists immigrant and refugee youth between the ages of 13 to 25 who are in the process of adapting to a new life in Canada, providing facilitation training to them so they can “then lead youth groups for newcomers who are experiencing difficulties or challenges with their integration process” (AMSSA 2003 p. 37).
- **Banner Art Project:** Another youth-directed program is on display in the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House: In this project youth created colourful banners which reflect the diversity of South Vancouver’s neighbourhood and businesses (*The AMSSA Insider* 2005).
- **Friends of Simon:** An innovative pilot project that has been underway in the Lower Mainland since the summer of 2006. Targeted at immigrant and refugee children between grades 1-8 whose literacy skills are below grade level, the project matches up children with university students at SFU for after-school tutoring and outreach services.
- **Settlement Workers in Schools** (see section 1.2.3)
- **Safe Harbour Youth Ambassador Program:** “A BC-wide program that engages youth in creating welcoming environments for diversity in their schools and communities” that promotes cultural diversity and eliminates racism in partnership with the business community.<sup>21</sup>

21. Available at <http://youthambassador.ca/>

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A range of additional funders for youth programming exist. Service Canada provides funding for youth employment, while the provincial government offers program funding through the BC Direct Access Gaming Grants. The United Way of the Lower Mainland and the McCreary Foundation fund many of the youth programs throughout Metro Vancouver (AMSSA 2008)

### 1.3.7 Seniors

Of the 800,000 seniors living in BC in 2006, 35% of them were immigrants (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch 2007). As such, the need for range of multicultural seniors' services is apparent. The Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat focuses on the challenges that arise from an aging population, with an awareness of immigrant seniors. They have developed the Seniors Healthy Living Framework to promote collaborative solutions to these challenges. A range of other resources and services are available through seniors' centres and government ministries. Some key examples include:

- **411 Seniors Centre Society:** This senior centre in Vancouver offers several projects focusing on seniors and multiculturalism:
  - *Elders Diversity Exchange Project:* A project that mobilizes and creates opportunities for ethno-cultural seniors to celebrate their unique contributions to society, and to share their culture, skills, stories, and experiences through a series of nine cosponsored programs, services and celebratory events.
  - *The Multicultural Seniors Advocacy Project* sought to build support networks between, and provide language-specific, culturally-sensitive advocacy training workshops to, ethnic-cultural seniors. The workshops were geared to empower participants with the tools and knowledge they need to participate in, and influence, policy development and decision making in the areas that affect their lives as they age.

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- *The Multicultural Volunteer Project*, conducted in partnership with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Multicultural Health Education Program, piloted a peer-outreach health information program for ethno-cultural senior volunteers . . . [who] were trained in their own language by bilingual/bicultural trainers, about the physical and mental health benefits of active living, community involvement and senior-appropriate exercise. These senior volunteers then disseminated the written and verbal information to their peers, again, in their own language and in culturally-appropriate ways (411 Seniors Centre Society 2006, p. 23).

- **BC Seniors Guide:** The Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport publishes the BC Seniors' Guide in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi. The guide offers information on a range of services available to seniors throughout BC.

- **Seniors Healthy Living Network:** A network established to advise government on engaging B.C. seniors, promoting healthy living, and building supports for B.C.'s older residents"<sup>22</sup>

Seniors services receive funding from a range of sources, including federal provincial and municipal governments and community foundations. Vancouver Coastal Health provides significant funding "with programs designed to promote the health and wellness of seniors" (AMSSA 2008, p.12). Additionally, the United Way of the Lower Mainland provides funding, as seniors represent an area of focus (AMSSA 2008).

### 1.3.8 Gender Issues

Of the nearly 1.1 million immigrants living in BC in 2006, 47.2% (Immigration Partnerships and Initiatives Branch 2007), 47.2% were women. Immigrant services that address gender issues, and in particular the needs of female immigrants, is key to successful settlement, adaptation and integration.

22. Press release available at [http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2005-2009/2009HLS0026-000538.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2009HLS0026-000538.htm)

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Some resources exist to address the needs of women:

- **Pathways to Gender Justice:** The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) has published a valuable resource for organizations preparing to review immigrant and newcomer programs in the Lower Mainland. This tool kit “seeks to educate and inform the immigrant and refugee serving sector about gender issues, and encourages agencies and workers to incorporate gender analysis into their work.”<sup>23</sup>

- **Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS):** PIRS is a non-profit society that provides services for immigrant women and their young children in Vancouver. These programs and services are designed to provide newcomers with “opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and confidence needed to participate more actively in the community.” These programs include ESL and literacy classes, leadership development, training in group facilitation and volunteer opportunities and support.<sup>24</sup>

The main sources of funding in the Lower Mainland include provincial ministries and the City of Vancouver. Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Direct Access Gaming and the Ministry of Housing offer funding for women’s services (AMSSA 2008).

### 1.3.9 Social Participation

With the prospect of an aging and declining population, more immigration into BC and the Lower Mainland area in particular is both likely and necessary in the years to come. The integration of immigrants is vital both for social cohesion and economic development. To enable immigrants to feel part of society here we must treat them fairly and ensure that they have the right tools to participate fully. Integration is understood here as a continuous two-way process that is based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations both of immigrants and the host society. This directs attention towards the attitudes of the recipient societies, their citizens, structures and organizations.

23. Tool kit available at [http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork\\_library\\_detail.asp?doc\\_id=1004364](http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004364)

24. More information available at <http://www.pirs.bc.ca/>

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It also points to the openness of a society – how welcoming it is – of its newcomers (Jenson 2002).

Programs and resources that address social participation come from government ministries, community organizations and non-profits:

- **Host and Buddy Programs:** As part of the Community Bridging Initiatives (see Section 1.2.3), these programs provide an opportunity for an integration process that is a ‘two-way street.’ Host/Buddy encounters occur at various sites throughout the community. The intended outcomes for newcomers are to provide assistance with integration into Canadian life, while the intended outcomes for individuals and organizations in the host community are to develop cross cultural connections and foster inclusivity and appreciation for immigrants (AMSSA 2003).

- **Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program:** This program is “a three-year initiative that fosters inclusive, welcoming and vibrant communities in British Columbia.” This program offers small grants for community partnership development, knowledge transfer and exchange, public education and demonstration projects.<sup>25</sup>

- **Community spaces:** Spaces in the community in which to meet – like community centres, community halls, and neighbourhood halls – are extremely also important to the success of ethno-cultural minority communities in the Lower Mainland. The Community Room at MOSAIC provides an example of this (MOSAIC 2003a and 2003b), as does the Cultural Connections program at Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

A number of funding sources are available for these diverse initiatives promoting social participation; these include funding from all levels of government and community foundations (AMSSA 2008).

25. Available at [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/wicwp.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/wicwp.html)

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### 1.3.10 Municipalities

Despite the fact that municipalities are not required on constitutional grounds to manage ethno-cultural diversity, many run and fund programs supporting newcomers to Canada (Corriveau and LaRougery 2006; Dowding and Razi 2006; AMSSA 2008). Programs in many of the areas discussed above are funded or implemented by municipal or local governments. Some key examples of municipal participation in immigrant integration programs include:

- **City of Vancouver’s Report of the Mayor’s Task Force on Immigration:** The Mayor’s Task Force on Immigration was re-established by Vancouver City Council in 2006. The resultant report outlines a number of policy and program directions to be undertaken by the City in partnership with key stakeholders “to address immigration-related issues at a local level” (City of Vancouver 2007, p.1).<sup>26</sup>
- **Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP):** Welcome BC’s WICWP is a “three-year initiative that supports Welcome BC by fostering inclusive, welcoming and vibrant communities across BC. Municipalities play a key role in the development and implementation of WICWP programming.”<sup>27</sup>
- **City of Richmond’s Intercultural Advisory Committee:** The Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee was established in 2002 to help the City of Richmond work toward the vision of making Richmond the “most appealing, liveable, and well-managed city in Canada.” They have developed a strategic vision and work program to support the City and community in achieving this vision (Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee 2004)

26. Available at [http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/PDF/0711\\_MTFI\\_report.pdf](http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/PDF/0711_MTFI_report.pdf)

27. Available at [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/wicwp.html](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/wicwp.html)



These initiatives and others, such as the February 2007 dialogue on multiculturalism was held in Prince Rupert (*Branch Update* Spring 2007), reflect the growing role municipalities are taking with regards to immigration concerns.

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## 2.0 Research Methodology

The goal of the first year of the research project was to collect quantitative and qualitative data, in order to develop profiles and identify the needs of immigrant service seekers who had been in Canada for more than three years. With the literature review as a basis for questions, a survey and focus groups were developed to collect quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. These two methods of collecting data create a more detailed picture of immigrant integration and service needs in BC, and specifically Vancouver and Burnaby. Key trends, concerns and challenges begin to emerge, as do the stories behind them. While surveys or focus groups alone often only offer a small portion of what is relevant when considering a problem, mixed methods research allows researchers to see a broader and deeper (though not necessarily complete) picture of immigrant service needs after three years in Canada.

### 2.1 Survey

SPARC BC, AMSSA and the Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee (IICC) developed the survey collaboratively. The first draft of the survey was developed by SPARC BC, then presented to AMSSA staff and the Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee (IICC) for comments and revision. This feedback was incorporated into the final draft of the survey that was eventually distributed. The goal of the survey was to develop a profile of immigrants seeking services after three, five and ten years in Canada, determine which services they continue to access, and from what types of agencies. 456 surveys were collected, of which 248 were completed by participants in Canada more than 3 years.

The survey was distributed at nine different immigrant-serving and multi-service agencies<sup>28</sup> for a four-week period from Feb 20, 2008 to Mar 19, 2008. The surveys were translated into French, simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, and Korean to ensure the broadest possible participation. Distributing

28. Immigrant Services Society of BC, SUCCESS, Jewish Family Service Agency, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, MOSAIC, Multicultural Helping House Society, Collingwood Neighbourhood House, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House and Burnaby Family Life Institute distributed the survey.

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agencies were asked to provide surveys to anyone over the age of 18 coming to the agency to access settlement services and to only provide one survey per family.

The survey consisted of two components: the first was a short survey and the second was an extended series of questions. The short survey was intended for all immigrants, regardless of length of time in the country to develop a basic demographic profile of survey participants. The extended survey was designed for immigrants who have been in Canada more than three years. This section consisted of more detailed questions regarding employment, education, income and income sources, in order to develop a more detailed demographic profile of this group of immigrants. This was followed by a series of questions designed to determine which services they have accessed in the past, the services they still access and the types of agencies where they sought these services. The list of services included: English as a second language, employment services, referrals to government services, professional counselling, health services, support groups, parenting support, legal services, housing, youth services, senior services and a category for other services. Participants were asked about the services they had accessed from the agency distributing the survey, both past and present, as well as other agencies where they had looked for services. These agencies included other immigrant-serving agencies,<sup>29</sup> community centres, neighbourhood houses, family centres, government agencies, religious groups or other agencies. Two analyses were conducted. The first distinguished between participants from Burnaby and participants from Vancouver. The second analysis compared participants service needs over time, grouping them according to whether they had been in Canada between three and five years, six and ten years, or more than ten years.

29. Here “another social organization” means support services that are not covered by the other options, often, but not exclusively, other immigrant-serving organizations.

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## 2.2 Survey Limitations

There are some limitations with survey results due to the distribution by service organizations. In some cases surveys were only distributed to groups seeking specific services. One organization only distributed surveys to ESL students, thus likely skewing results on what services immigrants are seeking. While ESL services are important for many immigrants, the particularly high percentages of survey participants seeking ESL, either presently or in the past, may be due to this targeted distribution. In this case a number of women's classes were asked to fill in the survey, which may have also skewed the results of the survey (76.9% of survey participants were women). Another limitation faced in analyzing survey results is the disproportionate number of participants aged 31 to 50. Because they represent 58.8% of total respondents, it is likely that results will be biased in favour of services accessed by this age group (and not, for example youth and seniors services). Additionally, the experiences of immigrants aged 18 to 30 are underrepresented in the extended survey, as 58.6% of them have been here three years or less. Thus the results will be more meaningful for the two older age categories, 31 to 50 and 51 and up, as they are better represented in the extended survey.

Some comparisons between service needs in Vancouver and Burnaby were limited by the number of Burnaby responses. Only 32 participants from Burnaby completed the full survey, and of these, only 4 had been in Canada more than ten years. Furthermore, sample sizes of the different categories were quite different (with no more than 14 participants in any category required to compare service needs). Thus, comparisons of Burnaby's immigrant population needs with Vancouver's immigrant population needs were aggregate of trends in each city, rather than according to length of time in Canada. Even still, with only 32 participants from Burnaby compared with 219 from Vancouver means that the differences seen here are not necessarily conclusive.

The survey data was also limited in its ability to meaningfully cross-tabulate certain statistics. From the available data it was not possible to determine

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what specific services were sought at each specific agency beyond the agency distributing the survey. While the data gives a general sense of what services participants had looked for elsewhere, and where they had gone, the results of cross-tabulating these questions were not meaningful. Additionally, it was not possible to cross-tabulate the success in finding a particular service with any specific agency, other than the ones distributing the survey. Finally, the high number of null or void responses regarding services that could not be accessed render the results for this question unreliable.

## 2.3 Focus Group Methodology

To supplement the information obtained through the survey, five focus groups were held as part of this study. Focus group participants were recruited in two ways: (1) At the end of the surveys distributed through settlement and multi-service agencies, participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in focus groups; and (2) Service agencies assisted the SPARC BC researchers in recruiting qualified candidates for the focus groups. To qualify, participants needed to be above 18 years in age, able to participate in English and have been in Canada for longer than three years. Five focus groups were held in Vancouver and Burnaby at the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, MOSAIC, Roundhouse Community Centre, Burnaby Multicultural Society and Burnaby Family Life Institute. Focus groups were attended by anywhere from 8 to 18 participants, with a total of 53 participants. These participants were screened both by the surveys and by questions from the facilitator at the beginning of the focus group, to ensure that they have been in Canada for more than three years. Honoraria were provided to thank participants for their time.

The focus group questions focused the discussion around the types of services immigrants had accessed, both upon arrival and settlement, as well as more recently. The goal of the focus groups was to help determine what services are needed upon immigrants' arrival in Canada and how these needs changed over time; a key objective of the focus groups was to assess how participants' experiences differed according to the type of agency (immigrant-

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serving, multi-service or government agency). Participants were asked about the different agencies that they used when they first arrived in Canada and what services they were seeking. Participants were then asked what services they still accessed after several years in Canada and what agencies they accessed them through. Finally, participants were asked about the success in receiving these services, and whether their experiences differed according to agency type.

It should also be noted that the experiences of many participants in focus groups were in Metro Vancouver, more specifically Vancouver and Burnaby. To this end, these findings do not represent an analysis of immigrant-serving, multi-service or government agencies across Canada or even BC. They are only valid with regards to geographical context. Finally, as with any focus group, these findings represent only the experiences of participants, and while it is likely that common themes speak to greater prevalence of challenges or opportunities, it is also important not to universalize the experience of these small groups.

## 2.4 Focus Group Limitations

While the facilitated focus groups allowed a great deal of information to be communicated regarding necessary services, access to services and experiences at service agencies, certain factors limit the applicability of the findings. The focus group participants were predominantly female (79.2%), which could possibly skew results regarding service access and experiences toward the challenges faced more specifically by immigrant women than immigrants as a whole. However, it could also indicate that women may be more likely to seek services than men after three years in Canada, possibly because they have stayed home as care providers for the early years of settlement and are only now beginning to seek services. Further research is required in this area.

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## 3.0 Survey Results

### 3.1 Overview

The survey analysis looks at service needs according to both city of residence (Vancouver or Burnaby) and length of time in Canada, within three groups: those who have been here three to five years, those who have been here six to ten years and those who have been here more than ten years. While many of the survey results reflect common needs in both Vancouver and Burnaby, in many cases there were strong similarities between the municipalities; however, some service needs stood out much more significantly in either Vancouver or Burnaby. As discussed in the survey limitations section, the cross-tabulations for age according city of residence did not provide meaningful results, due to the low number of participants in certain categories.

Despite certain demographic imbalances, there are some significant shifts in service access between immigrants here for three to five years, six to ten years and more than ten years, that reflect the process of immigrant integration. The need for settlement services appears to drop over time as the use of other adaptation and integration services, such as government referrals and seniors' services, rise. However, as discussed in the literature review, the process of integration is not strictly linear. These survey results also show that some services viewed as settlement services, such as government referrals and employment services, continue to be accessed by immigrants who have been here for longer periods of time. While service needs therefore change over time, some services traditionally considered settlement services continue to play a role even as immigrants begin to adapt to and integrate into Canadian life.

### 3.2 Participant Demographics

A total of 456 surveys were completed, with 248 (54.4%) participants completing the extended survey and stating that they have been in Canada longer than three years: 18.1% have been here for three to five years, 16.9%

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for six to ten years and 19.4% more than ten years. 76.9% of participants were women, while 22.7% were men. Participants were largely married or in common-law relationships, with 75.5% indicating this as their marital status. The largest age demographic represented was the 31 to 50 age category, with 59.4% of all participants in this category. 12.7% of participants were 18 to 30, while 27.2% of participants were 51 and up. Table 1 represents the proportion of each age group according to their length of time in Canada:

According to Welcome BC's Profile of Immigrants,<sup>30</sup> in 2006 over 1.1 million people in BC, or 27.2% of the BC's population, were immigrants. 15.9% of this 1.1 million arrived between 2001 and 2006, while an additional 15.2% of the total immigrant population arrived between 1996 and 2000. Other immigrants included in this census count arrived prior to 1996. In 2006, men represented 45.1% of all immigrants, and women represented 50.2% of the total immigrant population. Approximately 15% of all immigrants are under 24; approximately 30% are between 24 and 44; approximately 35% are between 45 and 64; and approximately 20% are 65 and older. While it is difficult to compare these different age ranges with those used in the survey, there is comparable weight in the 'middle' age range (between 24 and 64) for the provincial immigrant population as in the 'middle' age range of the survey (between 30 and 51). A significantly higher proportion of women participated in the survey than the provincial average.

30. Age categories did not correspond to the age categories used in the survey and are provided here for general comparison. Data is available at:  
[http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/growing\\_your\\_community/trends/2006/pdf/immigration/British%20Columbia.PDF](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/growing_your_community/trends/2006/pdf/immigration/British%20Columbia.PDF)



**Table 1: Age ranges according to length of time in Canada**

<b>Length of time in Canada</b>	<b>18 to 30</b>	<b>31 to 50</b>	<b>51 and up</b>
Up to 3 years	58.6%	49.4%	29.0%
3 to 5 years	22.4%	18.1%	15.3%
6 to 10 years	15.5%	19.9%	12.9%
More than 10 years	3.4%	11.8%	42.7%

While a large proportion of each age category has been in Canada for less than three years, this is most pronounced for the youngest category and least pronounced for those 51 and up, who tended to have been in Canada for the longest period of time. This age group represents 60.2% of participants who have been in Canada for ten years and more, the only category in which participants aged 31 to 50 do not represent 60% or more of survey participants.

**Table 2: City of Residence and Length of Time in Canada**

<b>Length of Time in Canada</b>	<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>Burnaby</b>
Up to 3 years	44.1%	50.0%
3 to 5 years	17.3%	21.9%
6 to 10 years	16.6%	21.9%
More than 10 years	21.4%	6.3%

Of the 248 survey participants who had been in Canada three years or more, 219 were from Vancouver, while 32 participants were from Burnaby. The low number of Burnaby participants made it difficult to meaningfully compare participants from both cities according to length of time in Canada; thus in the following analysis comparisons between employment, education,

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immigration status and service needs are compared only according to city of residence. However, the above table provides some sense of the length of time participants from each city have spent in Canada. In Vancouver, 55.3% of survey participants had lived in Canada for more than three years, while 50% of Burnaby participants had lived in Canada for more than three years. However, the low number of Burnaby participants who had lived in Canada for more than ten years made it difficult to compare the service needs of each group between the two cities.

The demographic imbalances (high proportion of women, high proportion of married participants, low proportion of youth<sup>31</sup>) may in some cases have skewed the survey results more heavily toward certain services. However, in some cases demographic imbalances (e.g. low proportion of youth) may reflect the fact that many immigrant youth have been in Canada for less than three years, and this is important to consider with regards to service provision for those in Canada longer than three years.

### 3.3 Employment, Education and Immigration Status

#### 3.3.1 Provincial Averages

According to Welcome BC's Profile of Immigrants, the average income of immigrants working full-time in 2005 was \$47,585, compared with the total population average of \$50,855. The difference between average incomes for men and women was significant, with men earning on average \$53,789 and women earning \$38,941. Of the entire immigrant population, 15 and over, with income, the average total income was only \$31,023. Of immigrants aged 25-64, 12.4% had no degree, diploma or certificate, while 87.6% held some form of high school or post-secondary certificate.

31. While youth are often defined as those aged 15-24, this survey was only distributed to those above the age of 18. Thus, for the purposes of this study, youth are defined as those between 18 and 30, as they are most likely to be accessing youth services.

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### 3.3.2 Vancouver-Burnaby Comparison

There was some statistical difference between Vancouver and Burnaby in terms of employment, with Burnaby having a slightly higher rate of overall employment, and slightly fewer participants unemployed and looking for work. A total of 46.9% of participants in Burnaby were employed either part-time or full-time, while only 37.9% of participants in Vancouver were employed either part-time or full-time. 25% of Burnaby participants were involved in full-time work, compared with only 21.9% of Vancouver participants. Vancouver had a 5.5% rate of non-responses for this question; however, even this does not account for the difference between the two. Vancouver residents had a somewhat higher rate of unemployment for participants looking for work, 21.5%, compared with Burnaby's 18.8%, and a slightly higher rate for unemployed participants not looking for work (35.2%) versus Burnaby's 34.4%. Burnaby participants in this survey were somewhat better employed than Vancouver residents, while Vancouver had a somewhat higher rate of unemployment in participants looking for work. A high proportion of participants from both Vancouver and Burnaby live off a household income \$15 000 or less a year: in Vancouver this proportion was 32.9%, while in Burnaby it was 31.3%. In Vancouver 72.2% of participants lived off a household income of \$45 000 or less a year, while in Burnaby this rate is lower, with 62.6% reporting a household income of \$45 000 or below. This could be related to higher employment rates in Burnaby. This may also correspond to higher education levels in Burnaby participants: while 75% of Burnaby participants had completed at least some college or university, only 59.9% of Vancouver participants claimed a comparable level of education. Furthermore, while 31.9% of Vancouver participants had a high school diploma or less, only 25% of Burnaby residents claimed a comparable level of education.

Finally, Vancouver had a higher proportion of immigrants with citizenship status, while Burnaby had a higher rate of immigrants with landed immigrant or permanent resident status. In Vancouver 62.6% of participants held Canadian citizenship, while only 33.8% of participants were landed immigrants or permanent residents. In Burnaby, 53.1% of participants held citizenship, but 40.6% of participants had landed immigrant or permanent resident status.

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### 3.3.3 Three to Five Years in Canada

This group had the highest proportion of participants engaged in full-time work, at 28%. However, a significant proportion of this group was also unemployed and looking for work (23.2%), while a further 26.8% were unemployed and not looking for work. However, only 14.6% of participants in Canada between three and five years expressed satisfaction with their employment. 72% of this same group listed employment as their main source of household income.

Nearly one-third (31.7%) of this group listed annual household income was \$15 000 or less a year, while 79.2% listed their annual household income as \$45 000 or less per year. However, of all three groups of immigrants, this group had the highest level of education, with 70.7% having completed college or university and only 11.8% with high school education or less. 61% of this group of participants are landed immigrants or permanent residents in Canada, while 34.1% hold Canadian citizenship. This is consistent with Statistics Canada figures showing that more recent newcomers to have higher levels of education than did their predecessors. BC Stats states that “the percentage [of new arrivals] that possessed a university education has increased from 17 percent in 1980 to more than 50 per cent in recent years.”<sup>32</sup>

### 3.3.4 Six to Ten Years in Canada

This group had a higher number of participants unemployed and looking for work (24.1%) than participants currently engaged in full-time work (21.5%). However, participants in this group expressed the most satisfaction with their work: 34.2% were satisfied with their work, while only 7.6% were not satisfied. 73.4% of participants who have been in Canada between six and ten years listed employment as their main source of household income, while a further 10.1% listed social assistance or welfare as a main source of income.

32. BC Stats Infoline, Issue 05-47, November 25, 2005. Available at [http://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/204296/Infoline\\_nov\\_25\\_2005.pdf](http://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/204296/Infoline_nov_25_2005.pdf)

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29.1% of participants in this group listed their annual household income as \$15 000 or less, while 64.5% of all participants listed a household income of \$45 000 or less. A high proportion (44.3%) of this group had also completed college or university, but 29.1% also had a high school education or less. 31.6% of participants in this group are landed immigrants or permanent residents, while 64.6% hold Canadian citizenship.

### **3.3.5 More than 10 years in Canada**

This group had the lowest proportion of participants employed full-time (18.4%), but the highest number of participants unemployed and not looking (45.5%), likely due to the higher age demographic of this group. One quarter of this group were satisfied with their work, while only 9.1% were not satisfied. The main source of household income for this group was still employment (43.2%); however, 14.8% of participants in this group drew from old age pensions, while 10.2% depend on social assistance or welfare as their main source of income.

This group had the highest proportion of participants living with annual household incomes of less than \$15 000 (37.5%) and 70.5% of participants in this group had annual household incomes of less than \$45,000. This group was also the only group where no participants had households earning more than \$100 000 annually. Participants who have been in Canada more than 10 years were less likely to have anything greater than a high school education, with only 48.8% of participants having attended or completed trade school, college or university. Only 26.6% of this group's participants had completed college or university. 85.2% of this group holds Canadian citizenship, while 13.6% are landed immigrants or permanent residents.

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## 3.4 Service Needs

### 3.4.1 Overview of Service Needs

Overall, a significant proportion of survey participants responded that they had both looked for in the past and were currently seeking English as a Second Language training: 36.7% of participants had looked for ESL in the past, and 35.9% of participants were seeking it at the time of the survey. While the significance of these results may be in part due to the limitation noted above (that a significant proportion of surveys were distributed by one organization solely at ESL classes), this is nonetheless notable because it ranks highest even among all services that all participants had previously sought.

**Table 3: Comparison of services being used at time of survey and services used in the past, by immigrants in Canada longer than 3 years.**

Services sought	At time of survey	Previously sought
ESL	35.9%	36.7%
Employment Services	20.7%	15.2%
Referral to Government Services	19.8%	21.5%
Professional counselling	18.6%	12.7%
Health Services	15.2%	6.8%
Support Groups	14.8%	6.8%
Settlement Support	13.5%	11.8%
Parenting Support	13.1%	19.4%
Legal Services	12.7%	8.4%
Housing	8.9%	9.7%
Youth Services	8.4%	6.8%
Other Services	5.5%	2.5%
Senior Services	4.6%	0.8%

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Several other services were also in significant demand. Survey participants were seeking employment services (20.7%), referral to government services (19.8%), professional counselling (19.8%) and health services (15.2%). These responses, along with ESL (35.9%), represent the top five services all survey participants were seeking at the time of the survey. Services that participants had previously sought did not significantly differ from these results: along with ESL (36.7%), participants were also seeking referrals to government services (21.5%), parenting services (19.4%), employment services (15.2%) and professional counselling (12.7%). The major difference between past and present service requirements was the previous need for parenting services and the current need for health services. This overview of service needs reflects an immigrant population largely engaged in both settlement and adaptation into Canadian culture. While still meeting “the initial needs of newcomers” (e.g. accessing employment services and getting referrals to government services), the survey participants were currently seeking or had previously sought mainstream services, such as health and parenting services. Also, the survey results do not distinguish between levels of language training that participants were seeking; it is therefore difficult to assess whether these participants were seeking basic language training, or further developing their language skills. Table 2 provides details on the rates at which immigrants were looking for different services.

### **3.4.2 Service Needs in Vancouver and Burnaby**

Though similarities exist between service needs in Vancouver and Burnaby, some significant differences should be noted in determining what survey participants sought at organizations distributing the surveys, both at the time of the survey and in the past. At the time of the survey, participants in Vancouver were seeking, from most sought to least sought, ESL (36.6%), employment services (21.8%) and referral to government services (21.6%). Of additional importance were health services (18.7%), professional counselling (16.0%) and legal services (15.0%). In Burnaby, however, the most sought after services were parenting support (38.1%), ESL (28.6%) and housing (26.2%). Also of importance were referral to government services (23.8%), settlement support (23.8%) and health services (17.9%). In many cases these services, such as language classes, housing and settlement support

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and employment services can be considered settlement services, as opposed to adaptation and integration services, such as seniors and youth services.

While participants in both cities ranked ESL as a high priority at the time of the survey, the other services sought reflect the various needs of immigrants in each municipality. Vancouver responses showed the importance of health services and employment services to these participants. Although the demand for health services in Burnaby was also noteworthy, of much higher importance to participants was the need for parenting support, housing and settlement support. These services were less sought in Vancouver, with only 11.8%, 8.3% and 13.9% of Vancouver respondents respectively seeking these services at these organizations.

**Table 4: Comparing Service Needs at Organizations Distributing the Survey in Vancouver and Burnaby**

Services Sought	At the time of the survey		In the Past	
	Vancouver	Burnaby	Vancouver	Burnaby
<b>ESL</b>	36.6%	28.6%	37.0%	25.0%
<b>Employment Services</b>	21.8%	11.9%	15.1%	12.5%
<b>Professional Counselling</b>	16.0%	11.9%	7.3%	3.1%
<b>Settlement Support</b>	13.9%	23.8%	21.0%	3.1%
<b>Health Services</b>	18.7%	17.9%	11.9%	12.5%
<b>Referral to Government Services</b>	21.6%	23.8%	22.8%	9.4%
<b>Support Groups</b>	6.8%	14.3%	5.9%	9.4%
<b>Parenting Support</b>	11.8%	38.1%	3.7%	34.4%
<b>Housing</b>	8.3%	26.2%	10.0%	3.1%
<b>Legal Services</b>	15.0%	13.1%	12.3%	6.3%
<b>Youth Services</b>	4.8%	2.4%	0.9%	0.0%
<b>Seniors Services</b>	12.0%	10.7%	8.7%	3.1%
<b>Other Services</b>	5.5%	13.15	4.1%	0.0%

Similar differences can be seen in the services sought in the past by Vancouver and Burnaby participants. While Vancouver participants cited ESL (37.0%), referral to government services (22.8%) and settlement services (21.0%) as the most sought after at some point prior to the survey, Burnaby participants again had different needs. Also of note in the past for Vancouver participants

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were employment services (15.1%) and legal services (12.3%). The services sought most in the past by Burnaby participants were similar to those at the time of the survey, with parenting support (34.4%) and ESL (25.0%) as the most sought after, followed by employment services (12.5%) and health services (12.5%). In Burnaby, a small proportion of participants also said that they sought referral to government services (9.4%) and support groups (9.4%) at some time prior to the survey.

Thus while there exists some overlap in service needs from the organizations distributing the surveys for Vancouver and Burnaby, there are also significant differences in participant responses with regards to service needs. Either prior to or at the time of the survey, more than 20% of Vancouver participants accessed ESL, employment services, referrals to government services or settlement support. In Burnaby, however, either prior to or at the time of the survey, parenting support, ESL referral to government services and housing were accessed by more than 20% of participants. While participants from both cities shared the need for ESL and referral to government services, participants in Vancouver accessed employment services and settlement support more frequently from immigrant-serving organizations, while Burnaby participants accessed parenting support and housing services more frequently. However, these results do not necessarily reflect, as is shown below, that services such as employment services are less in demand in Burnaby, only that they are less sought after at these particular organizations.

**Table 5: Other Agencies Where Participants Sought Surveys**

<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>Burnaby</b>
<b>Neighborhood House</b>	12.6 %	33.3%
<b>Family Centre</b>	11.7%	33.3%
<b>Community Centre</b>	18.9%	27.8%
<b>Government Agency</b>	13.5%	16.7%
<b>Religious Group</b>	12.6%	16.7%
<b>Another Social Organization</b>	25.2%	5.6%
<b>Other</b>	0.9%	0.0%

Participants in both Vancouver and Burnaby also sought services at a range of different agencies, beyond where the surveys were distributed. Vancouver and Burnaby participants, however, accessed different types of agencies with different frequencies. While ‘another social organization’<sup>33</sup> was listed at the most frequent agency visited by Vancouver participants (25.2%), Burnaby residents most frequently went to either neighbourhood houses or family centres (33.3% each). Burnaby participants also went to community centres at a much higher frequency than Vancouver participants. Overall, the above table shows that more Burnaby participants had visited other agencies seeking services than Vancouver participants.

Finally, a comparison of services sought at other agencies remains relatively consistent with the service needs discussed above in both Vancouver and Burnaby, with some important differences. In Vancouver, the most frequently sought services at another agency remained ESL (36.9%), employment services (20.7%) and settlement support services (18.0%). This is relatively consistent with the responses from the organizations distributing the surveys, with regards to Vancouver participant’s service needs; a significant difference is the greater number of participants accessing settlement support and the decrease in participants seeking referral to government services. In Burnaby, however, the differences are slightly more noticeable. ESL and employment

33. Here “another social organization” means support services that are not covered by the other options, often, but not exclusively, other immigrant serving organizations.

services are more heavily accessed (38.9% and 27.8% respectively) at other agencies, while parenting support remains a highly accessed service (33.3%).

**Table 6: Services Sought at Other Agencies**

<b>Services Sought</b>	<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>Burnaby</b>
<b>ESL</b>	36.9%	38.9%
<b>Employment Services</b>	20.7%	33.3%
<b>Professional Counselling</b>	14.4%	22.2%
<b>Settlement Support</b>	18.0%	0.0%
<b>Health Services</b>	13.5%	27.8%
<b>Referral to Government Services</b>	15.3%	22.2%
<b>Support Groups</b>	14.4%	16.7%
<b>Parenting Support</b>	9.9%	33.3%
<b>Housing</b>	8.1%	0.0%
<b>Legal Services</b>	9.0%	11.1%
<b>Youth Services</b>	4.5%	5.6%
<b>Seniors Services</b>	4.5%	0.0%
<b>Other Services</b>	6.3%	0.0%

These results reflect the fact that in both Vancouver and Burnaby, survey participants were seeking different services at different agencies. While some, such as ESL and, in Burnaby parenting support, were sought widely at both multi-service and immigrant-serving organizations, others were sought at specific organizations.

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### 3.4.3 Service Needs According to Length of Time in Canada

Immigrants continued to access settlement- and adaptation-oriented services at organizations even after long periods of time in Canada: most, but not all, of these represent settlement needs. Throughout the three major time periods that participants have lived in Canada,<sup>34</sup> ESL ranks highly in all three: for those here three to five years and six to ten years, ESL ranked first at 34.1% and 50.6%, respectively. Language skills therefore represent the bulk. Furthermore, employment services consistently ranked high for each group of survey participants, indicating that employment remains a challenge for immigrants even after ten years in Canada. While direct settlement services are prominent among both those who have been here three to five years and those who have lived here six to ten years, they do not rank in the top three services accessed by those here for more than ten years. For this latter group, one of most pressing current needs is seniors' services, while in the past parenting services were required by this group. These results show that while the main services each group was seeking at these agencies related to settlement, in some cases other services were sought there, such as legal support and seniors services.

34. Survey findings were divided into three categories according to participants' length of time in Canada: those here for three to five years, those here from six to ten years and those here for more than ten years.

**Table 7: Services Sought at Agency Distributing Surveys, According to Length of Time in Canada**

Services Sought	3 - 5 years		5 - 10 years		More than 10 years	
	At the Time of Survey	In the Past	At the Time of Survey	In the Past	At the Time of Survey	In the Past
ESL	34.1%	36.6%	50.6%	45.6%	23.9%	26.1%
Employment Services	25.6%	20.7%	22.8%	11.4%	13.6%	12.5%
Professional Counselling	20.7%	4.9%	15.2%	5.1%	11.4%	10.2%
Settlement Support	19.5%	24.4%	12.7%	19%	9.1%	13.6%
Health Services	18.3%	11%	20.3%	15.2%	16%	10.2%
Referral to Government Services	18.3%	18.3%	24.1%	20.3%	19.3%	25%
Support Groups	9.8%	3.7%	12.7%	8.5%	2.3%	6.8%
Parenting Support	17.1%	8.5%	16.5%	10.1%	10.2%	45.4%
Housing	9.8%	9.8%	12.7%	7.6%	5.7%	10.2%
Legal Services	11%	8.5%	22.8%	15.2%	8%	11.4%
Youth Services	6.1%	1.2%	5.1%	0%	2.3%	1.1%
Seniors Services	4.9%	2.4%	6.3%	1.3%	23.9%	19.3%
Other Services	4.9%	7.3%	6.3%	3.8%	6.8%	0%

This is further reflected by some of the other services accessed by each group that did not rank in the top three. Both the participants who have been in Canada for three to five years and those who have been here for six to ten years were seeking health services (18.3% and 20.3% respectively) at the time of the survey and parenting services also ranked highly for these groups (17.1% and 16.5% respectively). While participants in Canada for three to five years had low rates of service access for non-settlement needs, participants here from six to ten years had previously accessed legal services and health services at significant rates (15.2% for each service). These agencies were therefore largely called upon to deliver settlement- and adaptation-related services; however, in some cases survey participants returned to these agencies to access services that are also offered by multi-service agencies.

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The survey results show that participants accessed a range of agencies seeking services; however, there was a significant dependence on the category 'another social organization' through each of the three groups.<sup>35</sup> A high proportion of participants who had been in Canada for three to five years (34.2%) looked for services at 'another social organization' than the one where the survey was being distributed. However, this group also accessed services in significant proportions at other agencies, particularly government agencies (23.7%) and family centres (21.1%). The group that had been in Canada between six and ten years had a high proportion of people accessing services from community centres (26.2%) and neighbourhood houses (21.4%). This group was also still seeking services at another social organization and family centres in equal proportions (16.7%). The final group, who had been in Canada more than ten years also showed a high proportion of participants going to another social organization (19.1%), while also going to community centres for services (17%). This group was also somewhat likely to go to religious groups or government agencies for services (12.8% and 10.6% respectively). The high tendency for all participants to seek services at another social organization reveals the likelihood that immigrants will seek to access non-settlement services from immigrant-serving organizations, even after having been in Canada for many years. However, the rise in use of community centres and neighbourhood houses by the group in Canada for six to ten years shows that immigrants often seek services at multi-service agencies alongside immigrant-serving agencies.

35. Here "another social organization" means support services that are not covered by the other options, often, but not exclusively, other immigrant serving organizations.

**Table 8: Other Agencies and Organizations Where Participants Sought Services**

<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3 - 5 years</b>	<b>6 - 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>
<b>Another Social organization</b>	20.5%	34.2%	16.7%	19.1%
<b>Community Centre</b>	19.7%	18.4%	26.2%	17.1%
<b>Neighbourhood House</b>	15.6%	18.4%	21.4%	8.5%
<b>Family Centre</b>	15.6%	21.1%	16.7%	8.5%
<b>Government Agency</b>	14.8%	23.7%	9.5%	10.6%
<b>Religious Group</b>	13.1%	15.8%	11.9%	12.8%
<b>Other</b>	0.8%	2.6%	0%	0%

The services that survey participants were seeking at these organizations correspond with the findings presented above: ESL and employment services were consistently sought by all groups, while other services were more in demand for some groups than others. As with the services that participants sought from the agencies that distributed the surveys, the group that had been in Canada between three and five years most often looked for ESL (36.9%), employment services (31.6%) and professional counselling (26.3%). Participants in Canada between six and ten years were also looking largely for ESL (57.1%), employment services (23.8%), health services (21.4%) and parenting support (21.4%). Participants in Canada for more than ten years had more evenly distributed responses, with only 17% of participants seeking ESL; the other major services this group was seeking included employment services (14.9%), government referrals (14.9%) and health services (12.8%). This group was also the most likely to access senior services from these other agencies, with 4.5% of participants stating that they had sought these services from a source beyond the agency distributing the survey.

**Table 9: Services Sought at Other Agencies and Organizations**

Services	Total	3 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	More than 10 years
ESL	36.9%	42.1%	57.1%	17%
Employment Services	23%	31.6%	23.8%	14.9%
Professional Counselling	16.4%	21.1%	14.3%	14.95
Settlement Support	15.6%	26.3%	14.3%	8.5%
Health Services	15.6%	13.2%	21.4%	12..8%
Referral to Government Services	15.6%	23.7%	14.3%	8.5%
Support Groups	14.8%	23.7%	16.7%	8.5%
Parenting Support	13.9%	10.5%	21.4%	8.5%
Housing	9.8%	13.2%	11.9%	4.2%
Legal Services	6.6%	7.9%	7.1%	6.4%
Youth Services	4.9%	5.3%	7.1%	2.4%
Seniors Services	4.9%	7.9%	4.8%	4.3%
Other Services	4.1%	0%	2.4%	4.5%

### 3.5 Survey Outcomes

Three key conclusions emerge from the survey. The first is that services conventionally considered settlement services continued to be accessed by participants, despite long periods of time in Canada. Language skills, employment services, referrals to government agencies, settlement support and housing services were all in significant demand for each group. The importance of these services to survey participants could represent barriers to moving from a settlement phase of immigration: without proper language skills, adequate employment and housing and an understanding of government services, it is impossible to realize some of the benefits of immigration. In particular, employment seems to be a key challenge. While a

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high proportion of immigrants who have been here for three to five years hold college or university degrees, many of them still regularly access employment services. Furthermore, few of these participants claim a moderate or high degree of job satisfaction. This represents a significant barrier to the process of integration.

The second significant conclusion is that despite their proximity and many commonalities, the service needs of Vancouver survey participants and Burnaby service participants are somewhat different. Some services, such as ESL and access to government referrals are shared by participants from both cities. However, the high demand for parenting and housing services in Burnaby differs from the demand at similar organizations in Vancouver for employment services and health services. It should also be noted that Burnaby participants sought services at multi-service agencies more often than Vancouver participants, and this changes the picture of service needs in Burnaby. While there was relatively little demand for employment and health services at organizations distributing the survey, one-third and 27.8%, respectively, of Burnaby participants sought employment services and health services at an agency other than the one conducting the survey. In Vancouver, however, there was a somewhat more consistent list of services accessed, regardless of whether it was at an immigrant-serving or multi-service agency.

The final significant conclusion of this survey is that while many immigrants who have been in Canada for more than three years access services from many organizations, many of them continue to rely specifically on immigrant-serving organizations, even after having been in Canada for many years. This does not necessarily represent an over-reliance on immigrant-serving organizations; rather, it reflects the importance of these organizations as one of many community and government tools that can help immigrants settle, adapt and integrate into Canadian life. As time passes immigrants access more community and government resources from different agencies and organizations. However, they continue to use immigrant-serving agencies to fulfil some of their service needs. This may be in part because they continue to need settlement services; however, the services accessed at these agencies

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are broader than the conventional scope of settlement services. It may be that the effectiveness of immigrant-serving organizations (e.g. SUCCESS as discussed in the literature review) is reflected in the continued use of them by even immigrants who have been in Canada more than ten years. A sense of comfort and familiarity is another potential reason for established immigrants to return to settlement agencies with which they have a previously established relationship, as seen in the focus group findings below.

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## 4.0 Focus Group Results

### 4.1 Focus Group Overview

The focus groups were designed to assess both the types of services immigrants who have been in Canada more than three years are accessing, the agencies they are going to, and the quality of their experiences at these agencies. Participants consistently cited the need for employment services. Participants also expressed frustration in dealing with particular agencies and bureaucracies. The focus group results reflect both the changes in services needed by immigrants after some time in Canada and the types of services that continue to be accessed even after three years or more in Canada.

### 4.2 Participant Demographics

The focus groups had a total of 53 participants, 79.1% female and 15.1% male.<sup>36</sup> 49.1% were married or common law, while 17% were widowed or widowers. 18.9% of participants were separated, while 11.3% were single. 34 participants had at least one child, and 19 had at least two children; 47.2% of participants were primary caregivers for their children, and an additional 9.4% were primary caregivers for their grandchildren. Only 17% of participants lived alone, while most (66.1%) lived with one to three others and 13.8% lived with four to six others.

Eighteen nations and twenty-two languages were represented, with high numbers of Spanish (28.3%), Chinese (28.3%)<sup>37</sup> or Tagalog (11.3%) speakers. 77.4% of participants were Canadian Citizens and an additional 18.9% were landed immigrants or permanent residents.<sup>38</sup> Two thirds of participants lived in Vancouver, while 20.8% of participants lived in Burnaby. While all participants had been in Canada more than three years, most (58.5%) had been in Canada for more than ten years. Most (56.6%) participants had annual household incomes of \$15 000 or less, while 88.6% had annual household incomes of \$45 000 or less.

36. The remaining participants did not answer the question.

37. Representing both Cantonese and Mandarin.

38. Two focus group participants either claimed refugee status or were on student visas.

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## 4.3 Focus Group Themes

### 4.3.1 Services Needed When First Arrived

At the focus group discussions, many of the participants shared their stories of immigrating to Canada. Many of them faced difficulties and challenges as soon as they arrived at the airport. The lack of orientation information leaves many immigrants at a loss once processed through immigration. Lack of familiarity with Canadian institutions combined with significant cultural differences mean many newcomers are unsure of how to settle into Canadian life. The focus groups reflected that the primary services required in the first few years after immigration revolve around building a life in their new home. Two types of service groupings dominated these participants' experiences as newcomers. The first type of services was oriented toward meeting basic needs, such as employment and housing, while the second type of service dealt with developing an understanding of both Canadian institutional practices, such as healthcare and income taxes, as well as its cultural systems. Both these types of services reflect the settlement phase of the immigrant process, with the former allowing immigrants to gain some stability and self-sufficiency, while the latter allows movement into the adaptation (and eventually integration) phase of immigration.

These two types of services, regarding basic needs and institutional/cultural needs, cover a range of services that the focus group participants attempted to access in their first few years in Canada. Participants cited a range of settlement needs in the former service group including accessing basic employment services, English training, housing, legal services for immigration purposes, healthcare and orientation information regarding where to access these resources and services. In the latter service group, participants noted the need for orientation materials around filing taxes and receiving benefits, banking and communications. However, many participants faced challenges in accessing both these types of services; both knowing where to go and the timely delivery of these services were cited as problems. Participants note that as new arrivals, they were unaware of available settlement or community

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services. These services were often discovered through word of mouth from friends, neighbours, or church establishments.

### 4.3.2 Services Needed After 3 to 5 Years

While participants noted that service needs evolved over their time in Canada, after three years in Canada immigrants still sought out services to meet basic needs, even while attempting to find services that would help their integration into their new home. Focus group participants identified a range of settlement-related services that they still needed to access even after three years, such as housing, medical services, and employment.<sup>39</sup> Because of difficulties in finding employment, many clients needed income support and affordable housing. Young families also needed childcare support. Similar to many Canadians, because of the difficulty in accessing affordable childcare, many could not work to support their families. Additional supports that aided integration included a range of services that build upon the institutional/cultural group of services, allowing more access to government institutions and community activities. A common need participants identified was legal services for issues ranging from divorce procedures, to immigration dealings and sponsorship of family class immigration. These legal services extend to further education around immigrant and refugee rights particularly with regards to advocating for government support and benefits and accessing the medical system. Some participants discussed the need to find a sense of belonging and inclusive community. Many returned to the organizations where they first sought help to find their place of belonging because of the previously built relationship.

### 4.3.3 Service Providers

Focus group participants identified three categories of agencies from which they seek services: immigrant-serving agencies, multi-service agencies and government agencies. Immigrant-serving agencies such as MOSAIC, MHHS, ISS, and SUCCESS provide both the services that address the basic needs of immigrants, particularly with regards to employment and language training; they also provide orientation and reference for other types of services,

<sup>39</sup> Employment was identified at every focus group as the key challenge in the settlement process in Canada; this is also reflected in the survey results, with employment services consistently ranking highly in terms of services accessed.

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such as government referrals and referrals for legal services. Multi-service agencies such as neighbourhood houses, YWCA, or community centres were also identified as places for support. In some cases these agencies are direct service providers or referral points to other service providers, while in other cases they offer the intangible services necessary for integration by acting as community hubs and providing safe and inclusive spaces. The third category of service providers is government agencies such as the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (now the Ministry of Housing and Social Development) or BC Housing for support and services; these agencies are accessed in order to secure specific supports, such as income assistance or affordable housing.

#### 4.3.4 Challenges in Accessing Services

Upon arrival, many immigrants or refugees are unaware of the available resources and services in the community. The reasons for these challenges differ according to both service and agency. Initially, participants found out about immigrant-serving agencies through word of mouth from neighbours, friends or church workers. Once participants had found services, however, there were the additional challenges of finding culturally appropriate information and dealing with bureaucracies or over-burdened agencies. Finally, participants simply found some government services difficult to access, whether due to bureaucracy or a lack of familiarity with Canadian social supports and institutions. These concerns (information barriers, overburdened agencies and unfamiliar government bureaucracies) represent significant barriers to the processes of adaptation and integration.

A key challenge for participants was simply finding information regarding the services they were seeking. Participants said that some immigrant-serving agencies don't have the right referral information. This could be due to policy changes that these agencies are unaware; however, it represented a significant frustration for participants. In some case, culturally appropriate information is unavailable: participants noted that this was particularly true of substance abuse and family violence issues. Participants also felt there was a lack of information regarding legal services at both settlement and

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multicultural organizations. In particular, participants noted the need for information regarding divorce proceedings for women. Finally, participants expressed concern regarding accreditation: many participants felt that the process was confusing, especially with regards to information, as they said it was difficult to find consistent information for the immigrant population.

Once the information barrier had been overcome and the appropriate agencies identified and contacted, accessing certain services presented difficulty for many focus group participants. For example, once legal services were accessed, many participants found that bureaucracy often accompanied these services and that staff members were unhelpful. In other cases, larger organizations or organizations with too many caseloads proved harder to get services at: participants felt they had to make appointments far in advance and it often required repeat appointments to address a particular issue. These challenges are significant when considering the importance of some of the services participants were accessing, especially employment and housing. Overburdened agencies and long periods of time required to access services represent significant barriers to settlement, let alone adaptation and integration.

Finally, accessing government services represented a significant challenge for participants. Because many of the participants came from countries that lack comprehensive social support systems or community resources, a barrier that emerged from the focus groups was the lack of familiarity with Canadian social support systems. In general, participants felt that government agencies (e.g. BC Housing, MEIA) were more difficult to get resources and support from, due to the strictness of their policies and the bureaucracy. Some participants felt that policies and procedures did not make sense to them and they were unable to understand why they did not qualify for some of the support services.

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### 4.3.5 Better Access to Services

Focus group participants identified some key services that either need to be better established or have the processes improved. Participants felt that an immediate hands-on orientation should be offered through both immigrant-serving and multi-service agencies, involving education on where to access services, and what to expect when doing so. They also noted that information in general regarding settlement, immigrant/refugee rights, services and the availability of resources should be more widely available, through a diverse number of agencies. Participants also felt that they wanted to see improvements in job search training (particularly developing consistent training methods), better governmental recognition of foreign credentials, improved housing opportunities, better access to and education around medical and health services and more educational opportunities for immigrants to upgrade their training or credentials.

### 4.3.6 Experiences at Agencies

In general, participants accessed services from two types of agencies: community agencies (e.g. immigrant-serving or multi-service agencies) and government agencies. While participant experiences at community agencies were generally (although not entirely) positive, experiences with government agencies were often more frustrating. These results reflect important differences in how services are delivered, which can provide insight into the settlement, adaptation and integration processes.

Although most participants had positive perceptions of community agencies, there were some frustrations expressed. Participants felt that the majority of positive experiences at these agencies could be attributed to the staff or volunteers there, who were more friendly, helpful and patient, and with whom they could build a relationship. Negative experiences were often attributed to receiving inaccurate information (or no information at all) about the services they were looking for, lack of staff expertise or conflicting advice (e.g. on job searches or in terms of resume format) or lack of information. Participants were less positive about government services. At many

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government agencies they felt that there are often a lot of procedures and paper work, making it difficult to actually access particular services or resources they are seeking. A key barrier in accessing government services was the difficulty participants had developing relationships with government employees: participants often met with several different people and had to review their situation each time.

#### **4.3.7 Improvement of Services**

Finally, participants discussed a variety of ways in which services could be improved that would not involve significant policy or legislative shifts. These involve improvements in the availability of information and staff training, as well as suggestions for incorporating volunteers into service delivery. These simple suggestions seek to address the difficulties faced by newcomers navigating an often complicated, unfamiliar set of institutions simply by addressing the accessibility of these institutions and recognizing the needs of immigrants, who have either recently arrived or lived in Canada for many years.

In all agencies, whether community or government, reliable information should be available and staff should be trained for cross-cultural communication. Participants noted the importance of receiving truthful, direct and reliable information in accessing services. Being able to rely on the information given to them, whether from community or government agencies, facilitates the settlement and adaptation processes. Furthermore, participants said that the availability of information in multiple languages would significantly reduce confusion and frustration in getting the services they need. Finally, participants suggested a broad approach that staff should take (particularly in government agencies, but not necessarily limited to them) in order to improve the quality of service delivery. They noted that staff should be patient with those who do not speak English as a first language, as both sides are likely equally frustrated; alongside of this, staff should be willing to communicate more transparently and honestly and not make assumptions about their clients. Furthermore, staff members with expert, professional and up-to-date knowledge regarding government policies, job search issues and

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legal issues are most effective at service delivery. Participants also noted their best experiences come from staff members who are willing to go out of the way to help: if someone is willing to take initiative to find more information on something he or she doesn't know about, this can dramatically improve service. Finally, participants discussed the possibility of expanding the role of volunteers with regards to translation. For example, participants suggested volunteers, particularly high school students, could be paired with service-seeking immigrants to help translate when these immigrants go to agencies that might not offer translation services. This would benefit the students by giving them volunteer experience, while also addressing language issues in service delivery.

#### 4.4 Focus Group Outcomes

Two major conclusions can be drawn from the focus groups. The first is that many settlement needs are not met within the first three, five or even ten years after arrival in Canada. These findings support the survey results, where participants stated that ESL, employment, settlement services, government referrals and housing were high on the list of key services they were currently accessing or had accessed, whether from immigrant-serving, multi-service or government agencies. Focus group participants felt particular frustration around employment, including the lack of meaningful employment and the difficulty having their credentials recognized. Even while participants were attempting to adapt and integrate into their new home, certain basic needs were not met, limiting their ability to successfully integrate into Canadian culture. While it may be unreasonable to expect full integration within ten years (or even a generation), immigrants would be better and more quickly integrated if their basic needs were met within the first three to five years after arrival.

The second major finding of the focus groups was with regards to the different experiences participants had with community service agencies versus government service agencies. Focus group participants were largely positive about their experiences with community service providers, whether they were immigrant-serving or multi-service organizations; however, they

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also expressed significant frustrations in dealing with government services or the agencies designed to help navigate them, such as legal aid. While this could be partly addressed by providing stronger materials to orient immigrants to Canadian institutions, this aspect of integration is, as noted in the literature review, a two-way street. Government agencies must ensure that their services address the needs of the broad spectrum of Canadians, whether they were born in Canada or are newly-arrived. Government staff would better serve immigrants if trained in cross-cultural communication and if materials were provided in a range of languages.

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## 5.0 Conclusions

The survey and focus groups show that immigrants who have been in Canada for more than three years still need access to settlement services, and that often the organizations offering these services, whether immigrant-serving or multi-service agencies, are much more accessible and inclusive for immigrant populations than other service agencies, particularly government agencies. Language and employment represent two services that were continually accessed by survey and focus group participants over time. This long-term need for services is not necessarily problematic with regards to ESL classes, as language needs to be improved over time. Participants' continued need for ESL does not therefore necessarily represent inadequate service provision, but instead that ESL is a need that spans settlement, adaptation and integration phases of immigration. Employment, however, is more problematic. Survey and focus group results indicated that adequate and meaningful employment services are needed by immigrants who have been in Canada for significant periods of time. While participants faced a range of challenges, employment remains perhaps the most significant barrier to adaptation and integration for this group of immigrants. A final challenge for survey and focus group participants was simply access to information that was clear, accurate and timely, making the settlement, adaptation and integration process much more difficult.

In order to allow immigrants to better realize the benefits of Canada, service organizations, whether immigrant-serving, multi-service or government agencies, need to be more strongly integrated. For many survey and focus-group participants, immigrant-serving agencies represent an important resource, even after many years, because of the personal relationships that have been built with the staff and the accessibility of resources. In many cases, participants also valued multi-service agencies, whether neighbourhood houses, community centres or family centres, for their inclusive approach to service provision. However, they felt that many government bureaucracies in Canada are inaccessible to immigrants, reflecting poorly on the multicultural principles espoused by our government. Those individual employees who were more patient and accommodating made a significant difference in

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participants' experiences accessing these agencies. Many of these challenges, particularly with regards to information and quality of service can be addressed by greater collaboration between immigrant-serving, multi-service and government agencies. As such, the next phase of this project is to develop a collaborative planning table in Vancouver to pursue further research, develop new service strategies and in the final phase implement them.

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THIS REPORT SUMMARIZES THE FINDINGS OF A RESEARCH PROJECT STUDYING THE SERVICE NEEDS OF POST-THREE-YEAR IMMIGRANTS TO VANCOUVER AND BURNABY. THE RESEARCH WAS COMPLETED BY THE SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF BC, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AFFILIATION OF MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND SERVICE AGENCIES OF BC AND MADE POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM THE UNITED WAY OF THE LOWER MAINLAND. THIS REPORT INCLUDES AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH, A LITERATURE REVIEW, SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF OUR RESEARCH.



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